

What is claimed is:

1. A communications exchange, comprising:

a communication interface for sending and receiving messages;

an event container connected to the communication interface, wherein received messages are sent to the event container as events;

a condition container connected to the event container, wherein the condition container contains a plurality of condition instances; and

an action container connected to the condition container, the action container containing a plurality of action instances;

wherein, when a set of events received by the event container matches a predicate of a condition instance, an action, defined in an action instance associated with such condition instance, is performed.

2. The exchange of Claim 1, further comprising:

a timer in the event container, wherein the timer generates events related to time.

5. A communication system, comprising:

a communications exchange; and

a plurality of user communications systems connected to the exchange;

wherein the exchange includes:

a communication interface for sending messages to, and receiving messages from, the user communications systems;

an event container connected to the communication interface, wherein received messages are sent to the event container as events;

a condition container connected to the event container, wherein the condition container contains a plurality of condition instances; and

an action container connected to the condition container, the action container containing a plurality of action instances;

wherein, when a set of events received by the event container matches a predicate of a condition instance, an action, defined in an action instance associated with such condition instance, is performed.

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9. A method for handling messages in a communications system, comprising the steps of:

providing a plurality of conditions and associated events, wherein a condition causes an associated action to be performed when a set of input event conditions is satisfied;

receiving a plurality of messages, each message being treated as an event;

when a subset of events satisfies a condition, performing the associated action.

10. The method of Claim 9, further comprising the steps of:

generating timing events; and

satisfying a condition using at least one timing event combined with an event which is not a timing event.

11. The method of Claim 9, wherein the conditions are interpreted at run time, whereby changes to the conditions can be made while a computer system is executing.

